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## \$3.9 million grant to inspire students at Shawnee, Moore and Fern Creek high schools to go to college

By Antoinette Konz • [akonz@courier-journal.com](mailto:akonz@courier-journal.com)  
• January 14, 2011

A \$3.9 million grant was announced Friday that will pay for educators at Shawnee, Moore and Fern Creek high schools to create a college-going culture among low-income and minority students.

The five-year grant, a partnership with the Council for Opportunity in Education, a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., and the GE Foundation will target 600 students at Shawnee, Moore and Fern Creek high schools.

"The money will be used to hire a college coach at each school, and will be used to mentor students, individually, through academic support," U of L President James Ramsey said during a press conference at Shawnee High School. "Students will have the opportunity to visit college campuses, meet with college faculty and learn more about the college experience so they are not intimidated."

The University of Louisville's Office of Community Engagement will oversee the program at Shawnee and Moore high schools, while Kentucky State University will lead the effort at Fern Creek High School.

Ramsey, Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer, Jefferson County Public Schools Superintendent Sheldon Berman and Mark Shirkness, a representative from General Electric, spoke at the news conference about the importance of community involvement in the public school system.

"Many of us here today were fortunate enough to be raised in homes where a higher education was valued ... our parents and grandparents taught us, from a very early age, that we would

attend college, that we could get a degree and that we could have a successful career," Fischer said.

"Unfortunately, many children in our city today do not have similar support networks and they don't have the encouragement to attend college or enroll in trade school," he said.

Shirkness said General Electric has a deep, firm commitment to education in Louisville.

"We firmly believe that if we are going to succeed, we have to play an active role in the process," he said.

Moore High School has been part of the project for the past four years and has had a college coach on hand to help students navigate their way to college for four years.

Deion Myrick, a 2010 graduate of Moore who is now a freshman at U of L, said if it weren't for the program, he would not be in college.

"I didn't even think I'd go to college," said Myrick, who is the first in his family to go to college. "This program got me the resources I needed. My college coach helped me do research of colleges, fill out the proper paperwork for financial aid and got me a lot of information on

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scholarships and grants."

Shawnee principal Keith Look and Fern Creek principal Houston Barber said students often become intimidated or overwhelmed when thinking about college.

"For many kids, going to college is like a foreign language," Barber said. "They become disenchanted with the whole process before they even start looking or considering it as an option."

Look said everyone knows it's important for students to go to college but "it's a whole other thing to make it a reality."

Ralph Fitzpatrick, associate vice president for community engagement at U of L, said data gathered through the effort will be used to help guide the way schools measure student achievement, engage parents in activities that encourage high school students to go to college and inspire more students to enter careers in math, science and technology.

The program is being funded with a \$20 million U.S. Department of Education grant awarded to the Council for Opportunity in Education and a matching grant from the GE Foundation, General Electric's philanthropic organization.

Reporter Antoinette Konz can be reached at (502) 582-4232.

#### About the Grant

- The program is part of a \$24 million effort by the Council for Opportunity in Education and GE Foundation to create a college-going culture among low-income, minority and potential first-generation college students across the country.
- It will target 50 students in each high-school grade level, or a total of 200 students at each school.

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## Raoul Cunningham gets King citizenship award

By Stephenie Steitzer • ssteitzer@courier-journal.com • January 13, 2011

FRANKFORT, Ky. — The Martin Luther King Jr. State Commission on Thursday gave Raoul Cunningham, president of the NAACP's Louisville Branch, its 2011 citizenship award.

Cunningham, who has served as Louisville Branch president since 2004, demonstrated for public accommodations for African Americans in 1961 in downtown Louisville. He was the first of many students arrested.

In a speech during the commission's annual King birthday celebration at the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History, Cunningham praised former Gov. Wallace Wilkinson for his 1990 decision to declare a state holiday on the third Monday of January to honor King.

Kentucky was the 41st state to authorize a state holiday to celebrate King's birthday.

In remarks to the roughly 100 people who attended the event, Cunningham discussed what he described as injustices that persist in the state, including a law that bars felons from voting unless they've had their rights restored and pending bills in the state legislature dealing with neighborhood schools and illegal immigration.

He said Senate Bill 3, which would guarantee children the right to attend their neighborhood school, would re-segregate public schools, and SB 6, which would allow local police to enforce federal immigration laws, would "essentially subject those who may look different than the majority of us to police harassment."

"These are today's situations," he said. "Those of us who are disciples of Dr. King, students of Dr. King, we must remain true to what the true King legacy is and what it is about."

During Thursday's event, Delquan Dorsey, executive director of the Governor's Office of Minority Empowerment, spoke about President Barack Obama's speech Wednesday on the shootings in Tucson, Ariz.

Dorsey said Obama echoed King's message, which wasn't just about bridging the divide between whites and blacks.

"It was about us as human beings living up to our full potential and having respect for each other," Dorsey said.

The event's keynote speaker was Donald Smith, superintendent of Marion County schools.

Smith, who said speaking at the event was one of his greatest achievements, told students in the crowd that it's their time to soar like eagles and to stay away from bad influences, which are like buzzards.

"You've got to do what eagles do," he said. "Don't act on a basis of where you are, but where you are going."

Reporter Stephenie Steitzer can be reached at (502) 875-5136.

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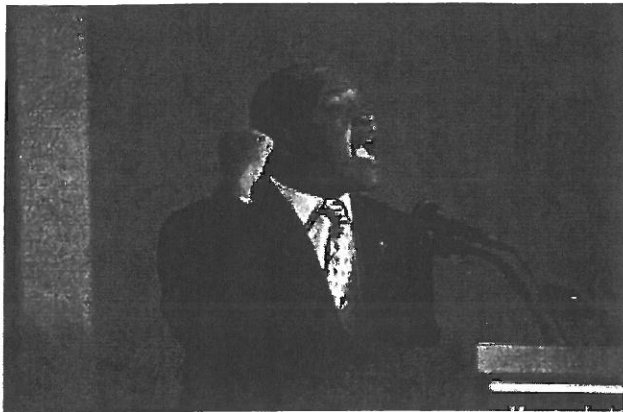
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Donald Smith, Superintendent of Marion County Schools, was the guest speaker. (Kylene Lloyd, The Courier-Journal) January 13, 2010

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